THE FANE OF THE DRUIDS.

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THE

FANE

OF THE

DRUIDS.

K

A POEM.

By Dr. Jno Ogilvie of Midmar, near Aberdeen.

——— STUPET INSCIUS, ALTO
ACCIPIENS SONITUM SAXI DE VERTICE, PASTOR. VIRG.

IN REBUS TAM ANTIQUIS, SI QUÆ SIMILIA VERI SINT, PRO VERIS
ACCIPIANTUR, SATIS HABEAM. LIV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, N° 32, FLEET-STREET.

M DCC LXXXVII.

THE
BANNER
OF THE
DRUIDS.
A POEM.

PRINTED FOR

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE subject and plan of the following Poem were suggested to the Author by having seen a small Druidical Fane, which being placed on an eminence, commands an extensive range of adjoining country. This monument of the most remote antiquity, brought to his view a race of men, whose manners and rites excite a curiosity that has given occasion to much learned and (on some points, no doubt) fruitless disquisition. Two causes have operated in producing this effect:—the well-known aversion of the Druids to written records; and the prejudices conceived against them by authors, from whose writings we draw whatever information we have received concerning their ceremonies and institutions. The first cause has deprived us of genuine and authentic relations supported by the evidence of history: the second, of confidence in those that have reached the present times; of which the authors put us upon our guard against implicit belief, by having interspersed in their histories of Druidism, and in their account of Druidical tenets, professions of avowed abhorrence and animosity. I refer here wholly to the writings of the ancients, the only sources of information on this subject. Writers of modern times, with dispositions to treat impartially concerning it, want the means of carrying their purpose

purpoſe into execution. Their taſk in conducting ſo dark and complicated a reſearch, is that of exhibiting a general view of points, whereof the truth is eſtabliſhed by univerſal conſent; and of forming probable conjectures reſpecting thoſe that are diſcordantly related, by collating detached paſſages which may throw light on each other, and on the ſubject. I conſider myſelf, therefore, in the preſent caſe, as a traveller, who, in the midſt of intricate and perplexing paths that meet together in an unknown country, is left to ſelect that which bids faireſt to conduct him to the end of his journey, after having been left by his guides in ſuſpenſe and fluctuation.

It is not without reaſon that we complain of the general hiſtories of nations, as giving us ſo much reaſon to deteſt the ſpecies, by offering to our view ſucceſſive ſcenes of wars, maſſacres, and devaſtations, from which the feeling heart recoils with horror: while man, ſimple and independent in his original ſtate, eſtabliſhing gradually, from rational motives, government and ſubordination; deviating, by a proceſs almoſt imperceptible in its movement, from the boldneſs of innocence into the chicanery of artifice; and from the ſimplicity of nature into the refinements of policy; remains wholly unknown to us. Yet curioſity is not more powerfully ſtimulated by any objects than thoſe which this ſubject calls upon us to contemplate. And our deſire of gratification gains ſtrength proportionally as the times wherewith we are to be made acquainted are remote, and the tranſactions obſcure. Primitive manners, and a correſponding ſimplicity of religious

religious institutions and ceremonies, are the subjects of the following poem; and open a field of pleasing, and not unuseful speculation. The introduction of arts, commerce, science, and polity, whereby this original system was finally subverted, and desires excited that are perhaps destructive of tranquillity, may be the objects of future examination.

It is somewhat extraordinary, that a theme so fruitful of the wild and the wonderful, as is that of Druidism, should not have arrested imagination, so as to have become, at an early period, the subject of a poem. Yet, though Druidical rites are described in epic poetry, and Druidical actors have figured in the drama, no poetical performance, either ancient or modern, has (as far as the author knows) the ritual ceremonies and observances of this celebrated order of men, professedly as its subject.

In the following attempt to place these in one view before the reader, the writer has endeavoured both to enumerate the institutions of the Druids, and to lay down their principles. But as the tenets of men who lived at so remote a period, could not be properly detailed in the poem, the notes that are subjoined to it, became unavoidable. And in refuting groundless charges, or in correcting misapprehensions, they were necessarily drawn into some length. It is hoped, however, that the curious reader will not find that these are entirely destitute of entertainment, nor the inquisitive, of infor-

mation. Of the merit of this eſſay as a poem, every reader muſt judge for himſelf. A man of genius will perhaps acknowledge, that ſome ſcenes of it cannot receive eaſily that colour *which imagination throws upon its objects; and will be more ready to obſerve, and to be pleaſed with that ſimplicity of language which was adopted as being correſpondent to the ſubject, than he who has no ſtandard in his own mind, by which he can judge of poetic merit or defect.*

Upon the whole, he who may have ſome curioſity to enquire into the manners and characters of his progenitors in the earlieſt ages of the world, will find as full an account of both in this little work, as could be collected from the few remains of antiquity that have reached the preſent times. The author has endeavoured to expoſe, in a juſt point of view, charges that are void of truth, and to rectify miſapprehenſions that are founded on inattention. And if the circumſtances ſhall in themſelves be intereſting to a reader of ſenſibility, his pleaſure will ſurely be ſomewhat heightened, if he ſhall judge, that an attempt to clothe obſcure informations in the language, and to illuſtrate them in ſome caſes by the images of poetry, has not been altogether without ſucceſs.

THE ARGUMENT.

Introduction. Manners, habitations, &c. &c. of the firſt inhabitants of North Britain. Face of the country. Manſion of the Druid, *and account of his perſon, dreſs, and character. Aſſembly of the Druidical order. Speech of the Arch-Druid. Building, and conſecration of the Fane. Signal of approbation from heaven. Ceremony of lopping the Miſletoe. Sacrifice. General feaſt. Office of the chief Druid in the Fane. Office of the Bardi, and ſubjects of their ſongs. Sublime ideas of the Deity. Oblation of the Warriour. Office of the Euvates, and of the* ſacred Virgins. *Ceremony, time, and manner of gathering the Miſletoe, and honours paid to him who brought it. Wonderful fable of the ſerpent's egg. Druidical tenets and principles. Aſtronomical diſcoveries. Doctrine of the Metempſichoſis, and application of it to promote the practice of virtue. Of the mundane diſſolution, and renovation. Moral leſſons. Effect on character and practice. Manner of receiving young warriors after conqueſt. Peace and general felicity. Compariſon of their manners with thoſe of modern times. Concluſion.*

THE ARGUMENT.

THE FANE OF THE DRUIDS.

SWEET are the peaceful ſhades, to memory dear,
And ſweet the note that melts on Fancy's ear;
Shades, from the FANE on yonder hill ſurvey'd,
And chearful notes that echoed from the glade.
Seen from yon central ſtone, a varied ſcene
Of hill and dale, with waving woods between,
O'erſpread with flowers of many a beauteous dye,
Holds in delighted gaze the lingering eye.
Hence too, the lowing herd, the reaper's ſong,
The pipe, the mellow horn reſounding long;
The ploughman's whiſtle as he turns the ground,
And rural paſtime gladden all around.

Time-hallow'd pile, by ſimple builders rear'd!
Myſterious round, through diſtant times rever'd!
Ordain'd with earth's revolving orb to laſt!
Thou bring'ſt to ſight the preſent and the paſt.
Rapt with her theme, bold Fancy wings her flight
To ſilent ages long involv'd in night;
Bids clouded forms ariſe to ſight diſplay'd,
And ſcatters light along th' oblivious ſhade.
Long ere the winds an hoſt in triumph bore,
By Cæſar led, to Albion's diſtant ſhore;
Ere yet the voice of far-reſounding Fame
O'er her wide regions ſpread the Roman name;
A patriarchal race the land poſſeſs'd
In earth's firſt days; by Heav'n with plenty bleſs'd:

Nor

In earth's firſt days.—We cannot, I apprehend, fix upon any particular time, as the æra of the druidical eſtabliſhment, either in Britain, or any other country. Was this a proper place for the diſcuſſion of ſo complicated a ſubject, it might, perhaps, admit of no difficult proof, that the vaſt body of men, known by the deſignations of Brachmans, Magi, Bonzas, Celtes, Druids, &c. &c. although ſpread over regions the moſt diſtant from each other; were all properly members of one great ſociety, united in the belief of certain principles, whereby they are particularly diſtinguiſhed. At the time when the world was peopled by the deſcendants of Noah, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that his poſterity preſerved, in their various

Nor plough, nor ſickle knew th' uncultur'd train;
Nor broke the glebe, nor reapt the bearded grain;
Nor in o'erſhading hamlets ſlept ſecure;
Nor warm in veſtments, brav'd the tempeſt's power:

various migrations, ſome part of thoſe doctrines which he may have taught them. And it would have been ſtrange if theſe original truths had not been debaſed and disfigured, during the courſe of many ages, by foreign intermixtures. The great doctrines of the unity of God, and of his perfections; of the creation of the world within a fixed period, and of its tendency to diſſolution; not to mention many others which might be enumerated; characterized the various claſſes above mentioned, and were moſt probably coeval in the minds of men with the earlieſt ages of population. See Diog. Laert. in proem. Hyde de Relig. Vet. Perſ. cap. 9. Philoſt. Apollon. Strabo, lib. 4. Even thoſe obſervances, and tenets which are properly *druidical* in the general eſtimation; as the veneration of the Oak, and the belief of the Metempſichoſis, may be traced to periods of the moſt remote antiquity. I ſhall make ſome obſervations on the former obſervance, in a ſubſequent note. If we give credit to Herodotus, the doctrine of a metempſichoſis had its origin in Egypt, at a very early period. That nation believed, according to our author, that the ſoul, after the time of it's removal from the body, remained ſeparated from all connection with matter; and occupied the mauſoleum of the deceaſed, as it's habitation, until the body became corrupted. From that time, it continued to tranſmigrate, during three thouſand years, into innumerable animals of every denomination; until at the end of this revolution it again reanimated the human form. Lib. 2.——I ſhall juſt obſerve farther on this ſubject, that, according to the teſtimony of the moſt approved travellers, the tenets above enumerated, and in particular that of a metempſichoſis, are received by the Chineſe Bonzas, as parts of their religion; of which the antiquity is ſurely beyond queſtion. Le Compte Du Halde.——It ſeems to follow from theſe obſervations, that the firſt inhabitants of the Britiſh iſles either brought along with them the principal druidical tenets, at the time when they peopled the country, or adopted theſe ſoon after their arrival. At any rate, there is not the leaſt reaſon to believe that any part of the religious ſyſtem of the Druids was borrowed from that of the Greeks and Romans. Vid. Univ. Ancient Hiſt. vol. 18. and Auct. ibi citat.

Skins

Skins o'er their limbs, unſhap'd, and rudely caſt,
The wolf's rough garments, ſcreen'd them from the blaſt:
Beneath the ſhelt'ring trees they preſs'd the ground
Mid' ſummer heats, and ſpread the boughs around.

Bowers in the woodland's depth, or caverns drear,
Form'd their deep haunts, when winter rul'd the year:
Yet there, at eaſe amid' their calm retreat,
They heard without, the raging tempeſt beat;
Enjoy'd with chearful hearts the ſober meal,
Nor ſhrunk at howlings echoing o'er the vale.

Yon hill with heath embrown'd, yon verdant mead,
Where Ceres' liberal gifts profuſely ſpread,
Yon plains, with corn and ſmiling herbage crown'd,
One mighty foreſt once encompaſs'd round.
Here, ſimple, honeſt, and unvers'd in art
That while it ſoftens, yet unmans the heart;
Conceal'd beneath the wood's umbrageous maze,
The ſons of nature paſs'd their eaſy days.
Sweet was the ſhepherd's pipe, the muſe's lyre,
What time ſome Bard, along the warbling wire

Flung his rough hand, impatient of controul:
Wild were the ſwelling notes, yet pierc'd the ſoul.

Thrice happy days, when to reſtraint unknown,
Each little ſovereign deem'd the world his own!
Secure they roam'd beneath one *parent guide*;
God ſpread their table, and their food ſupplied.
He gave the deer to range the mountain's brow,
And herds to rove along the vales below;
Their victims theſe the wandering people made,
The chaſe at once their paſtime, and their trade.

One ſage they honour'd with ſupreme command:
A peaceful ſceptre grac'd his holy hand.
Faſt by a ſtream, from copious urns ſupplied,
That ruſh'd impetuous down the mountain's ſide;
A dell with leaves of oak, and poplar ſtrow'd,
Conceal'd the Druid Chief's rever'd abode.

Though time with ſilver locks adorn'd his head,
Erect his geſture yet, and firm his tread:
In youth, a warriour, long the firſt in fame;
In age, a ſire of venerable name.

His

His ſeemly beard, to grace his form beſtow'd,
Deſcending decent, on his boſom flow'd:
His robe of pureſt white, though rudely join'd,
Yet ſhew'd an emblem of the pureſt mind.
Stern virtue beaming in his eye controul'd
Each wayward purpoſe, and o'eraw'd the bold:
Tam'd by his high demeanour, all ſurvey'd
The ſage with reverence, and with joy obey'd.
As yet, though each beneath his oak ador'd,
With juſt obſervance, heav'n's eternal Lord;

And

His robe of pureſt white.—It is well known that the Druids were always clothed in white garments. Of their regard to this colour above others, we ſhall have occaſion to produce another proof, in the courſe of our obſervations on their rites and ceremonies.

Beneath his oak, &c.—I know not how it has happened, that the inhabitants of very diſtant nations appear to have agreed, in the firſt ages of ſociety, in their peculiar veneration of the Oak. Yet the fact is inconteſtible, from the evidence both of ſacred and of prophane hiſtorians. This tree is often mentioned in the book of Geneſis, and in others, as having been peculiarly honoured by Abraham, Jacob, Joſhua, by the man of God, and even by the angel, who is ſaid to have "ſat under it." Gen. xii. 6. xxi. 33. Joſh. xxiv. 26. 1 Kings xiii. 4. Judg. vi. 11. See likewiſe Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. xvi. c. 44. Luc. Phar. Lib. iii. Tacit. De Mor. Germ. Cæſar. Comment, &c. &c.—Of the various etymologies of the term DRUID, (etymologies with which learned men appear to be fond of amuſing themſelves and their readers) the moſt probable appears to be, that of deriving this appellation from the word Deru, which among the ancient Britons ſignified an Oak. There is a ſtriking ſimilarity in the ſounds of theſe words, as there is likewiſe in the Greek word Δρυς, which has the ſame ſignification; and, in Pliny's eſtimation, is the original of the term. Plin. ubi ſup. Be that matter as it may, we

are

And cropt the Miſletoe, and on the pyre
With grateful offerings fed the ſacred fire:
No temple bleſs'd the conſecrated wood,
Nor altar roſe to ſmoke with victim blood;
Whence God, when call'd a guilty race to ſpare,
Might yield, invok'd by ſacrifice and pray'r.

This knew the Prieſt, and call'd his ſons around
From all the vales, and foreſt's utmoſt bound:
From theſe, the various tribes of every name
Conven'd at once, a mixt aſſembly, came.
The Bard, the warrior there the concourſe grac'd,
The ſkilful archer, with his bow unbrac'd:
In order rang'd th' inferior Prieſts appear;
Youths taught to heave the rock, or lift the ſpear:

are certain that the Druids venerated this ſacred tree above all others; as containing virtues of ſovereign and of peculiar efficacy. They believed not only that God had choſen the Oak, as the place of his more immediate reſidence; but that every thing belonging to it came from heaven. It's fruit, and in particular the ſubſtance called the Miſletoe, which ſometimes grows at the extremity of it's branches, they conceived to have a divine virtue, from which both man and beaſt received benefit, in every diſeaſe of whatever nature. They therefore held their religious aſſemblies under this tree; ſprinkled it's leaves over their feaſts; and wore ſmall boughs of it at all their ſacred ceremonies. Vid. Plin. Nat. Hiſt. ubi ſupra, and Auct. ſupra citat.

To theſe, in ſilence round his manſion brought,
The leader riſing, ſpoke his anxious thought.

" My ſons, with reverence hear what Heav'n requires:
" Know, what I ſpeak it's ſovereign Lord inſpires.
" Late, as beneath the lunar light I ſtray'd,
" And mark'd her orb far-beaming o'er the ſhade;
" I ſunk beneath a ſpreading beech conceal'd,
" And death-like ſleep o'er every ſenſe prevail'd.
" When lo! Arduina, darting from the ſkies,
" (I knew the Goddeſs by her flaming eyes)
" Before me ſtood confeſs'd! Her geſture bold,
" And azure plumage, ſprinkled o'er with gold
" Reveal'd the power divine. She ceas'd her flight
" Amid' the grove illum'd with keener light:
" On me the queen celeſtial fix'd her look
" Severe, and thus, at laſt, reſentful ſpoke:—

When lo! Arduina.—A druidical Goddeſs, who is ſuppoſed to have repreſented the moon.

" Whence

" Whence is it, Druid, that this thoughtleſs race,
" Unfixt, and wandering wild from place to place;
" Though all, with morn, and at th' o'erſhading hour
" Of night, with vows invoke th' eternal Power;
" Unheedful yet of other rites, have giv'n
" No Temple ſacred to the Lord of heav'n?
" Go, bid with ſpeed th' aſſembled tribes to raiſe
" A FANE, to laſt in all ſucceeding days:
" In form, an orb as yonder worlds on high,
" And free to air, as yon expanded ſky
" Stands to the feather'd train.—An altar place,
" Unmark'd with pomp, or ornamental grace;
" Expos'd fair opening, where the morning ray
" Firſt gives the promiſe of the coming day.

In form an orb.—The druidical fanes, or temples, if we may give them that name, are all of an orbicular form. I think it is not improbable that this was an imitation of the figure of the heavenly bodies; a conjecture which acquires ſtrength from that attention, with which, as we ſhall ſee afterwards, the Druids appear to have ſtudied aſtronomy.

And free to air, &c.—The area of the grove, or temple, was always left open above.

" Thence, with due forms invok'd, the Lord of all
" Will bend, indulgent to the ſuppliant's call;
" From heav'n's empyrean height attend his pray'r;
" Nor ſhall a nation's voice be loſt in air."
" Arduina ſpoke: then, riſing on the wind,
" Left in her flight the parting cloud behind.
" Haſte then, my ſons, your ſtrength and ſkill be ſhown:
" From it's deep bed unlooſe the cumbrous ſtone.
" Around yon oak your mighty fabric trace;
" Yon oak, whoſe broad boughs ſhade that ample ſpace.
" Meantime to Esus raiſe the tuneful lay,
" The King ſupreme, whom heav'n and earth obey."

He

Meantime to Eſus, &c.—The intelligent reader needs not to be acquainted, that God was worſhipped by the ancient Gauls, who moſt probably peopled our iſland originally, under the name Eſus. Of the various etymologies of this term, the moſt probable, in my opinion, would be that of it's derivation from Æſar, the term by which the ancient Etruſcans diſtinguiſhed the Supreme Being; provided we were certain that the Gauls borrowed the names of their deities from the Etruſcans. But this cannot be affirmed with certainty. The reader will find ſome ingenious conjectures on this ſubject in the Ancient Univerſal Hiſtory, vol. xviii. p. 540, 542, &c. &c. The learned authors of that work appear, however, to me to have failed in attempting to derive theſe deſignations from the Hebrew; although they have indeed traced a very cloſe affinity betwixt words in this latter language, that are expreſſive of ſome of the perfections of God, and thoſe of the former, which denomi-

He ſaid.—With joy th' obſequious numbers hear,
And now prepare the ſolemn Fane to rear.
All to the rock with haſty ſteps repair,
And tear th' embowell'd maſs, and lift on air.
Eight bulks immenſe, in eight ſucceeding days,
Arm'd with rude tools, a toiling people raiſe.
What force, what engines, with the labouring throng,
What levers bore th' enormous frames along!
How with each rude weight toil'd th' attendant train,
Up the ſteep height aſcending from the plain!
How ſmoked the ſtraining courſers as they trode!
How bent each axle with th' unwieldy load!

nate the Deity himſelf. After all—this ſpecies of criticiſm, which has it's uſe in tracing the origin, and in diſtinguiſhing the manners of ancient nations, is, in many inſtances, only a kind of learned trifling, which fails of impreſſing upon the mind any permanent conviction. And no other excuſe can be aſſigned for it, than that the reader is left to chalk out a path to himſelf in the wide field of conjecture, in thoſe caſes only, wherein nothing better or more ſatisfactory, than conjectural evidence, can be offered to his review. With reſpect to the ideas which the Druids entertained concerning the divine perfections and providence; nothing needs to be added to the teſtimony of Tacitus, in his work De Moribus Germanorum, to which the reader, who may want information on this ſubject, is referred. A particular account of their noble and ſublime conceptions of the Deity would ſwell this note to too great length. Theſe are likewiſe frequently mentioned in the poem.

What

What art, with power combined, the ſcene diſplays;
Skill to conduct the maſs, and ſtrength to raiſe!
At laſt the fabric ſlowly comes in view;
A wondrous form, to each beholder new!
The ſtones they lift, and working to and fro,
Deep ſinks the ſpreading baſe in earth below,
Then reſts immoveable. With joint accord,
All raiſe the ſong to heav'n's almighty Lord.

Beneath the central oak the Father ſtood,
And ey'd his ſons now ranged along the wood,
All on the work intent; then o'er the ſhrine
He roſe, and thus invoked the Power divine.

" O! Thou, whoſe voice at midnight's awful hour,
" Oft' from the ſolemn ſhade, or conſcious bower,
" Or foreſt, ſhaking with it's leaves around,
" Or oak's broad boughs, that murmur to the ſound,
" Speaks to this raptur'd thought! Indulgent, hear
" Our vows, with warmth preferr'd, yet urg'd with fear.
" To Thee, great Power! who hold'ſt unbounded reign,
" This altar ſtands, and conſecrated Fane

" Rear'd

" Rear'd at thy high command.—Propitious bend,
" Thine ear, when hence our ſongs to heav'n aſcend!
" The warrior's juſt requeſt; the Bards who raiſe
" On harps the deathleſs ſtrain that ſpeaks thy praiſe;
" The virgin-propheteſs, whoſe eyes pervade
" (To mark the future) Time's myſterious ſhade;
" The prieſt, who near the ſacred altar ſtands,
" And aſks thy counſel with uplifted hands,
" Indulgent mark! Thine is this woodland's maze,
" That hears the ſolemn lute's melodious lays

The Bards who raiſe, &c. &c.—The Druids were divided properly into three claſſes. Theſe were the Vacerri, the Bardi, and the Eubages. Of thoſe, the Bardi or Bards held the ſecond place after the ſacred miniſters of religion; and were reſpected by the people in general, as perſons of eminent dignity and uſe in the community. Their office was to record the great actions of illuſtrious men, in order to excite their ſucceſſors to an imitation of their example. They were not exempted from this duty even in battle, wherein they mixed promiſcuouſly with the combatants, in order to encourage them to fight with intrepidity and perſeverance. Tacitus informs us, that the women, upon theſe occaſions, expoſed themſelves to equal hazards as the ſoldiers. The paſſage is picturesque and animated. Druidæ circum, preces diras ſublatis ad cœlum manibus fundentes, novitate aſpectus perculere milites; ut quaſi hærentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus præberent. Annal. Lib. xiv. c. 29. See likewiſe Lucan. Phar. Lib. i. Diod. Sicul. Lib. vi. Macrob. Saturn. Lib. vi. and Ammianus Marcel. Lib. xv.

The virgin-propheteſs.—Among the female Druids, they who were real virgins, were thought to poſſeſs a ſpirit of prophecy. This circumſtance will be mentioned afterwards.

" To thee preferr'd! If to thy liſt'ning ear
" Our pray'rs are grateful, as our hearts ſincere;
" Grant then ſome leading ſign that ſhows regard,
" Or voice that ſpeaks our labour's wiſh'd reward."
He ſaid—in ſtill ſuſpenſe th' aſſembly ſtood,
Nor one low murmur breath'd along the wood.
As when, within their folds, the ſhepherd ſees
At eve his fleecy charge reclin'd at eaſe;
The vale that echoed through the live-long day,
Now deeply ſtill, reflects the parting ray;
Nor thruſh is heard amid' the thorny brake,
Nor lapwing ſkimming, curls the ſleepy lake;
But Cynthia, riſing, views with conſcious pride
Her creſcent glittering on th' unruffled tide:
Such was the ſcene; when, ſhaken from the baſe,
The tall oak bending, fixt each wondering gaze!
And lo! ſoft muſic heard remote and low,
Slow floating breathes and trembles o'er the bough!
It ſwells by juſt degrees, and ſends on air
The chearful ſounds that ſpeak accepted pray'r!

All catch with joy the voice, and wide around
With their long peal the diſtant hills reſound.
Two milk-white bulls, now ſlaughter'd on the floor,
Firſt ſtain'd the ſacred porch with victim gore.
A due libation next the leader pours
On earth, and hails the conſecrated bowers.
One then of vent'rous heart, the trunk aſcends;
The yielding bough beneath his footſtep bends;
High on th' extended branch he takes his ſtand,
And lops the Miſletoe with careful hand.
His careful hand a golden engine guides,
To part the ſeeds th' attendant chief divides.
Bleſs'd fruit! In peril's laſt extreme applied
To heal deep wounds, and bid diſeaſe ſubſide;
Then deem'd by all Heav'n's nobleſt gift below,
That ſtills the plaint of life-conſuming woe!

Two milk-white bulls.—Pliny has preſerved a particular account of this ceremony, and of the manner of lopping the miſletoe. See his Nat. Hiſt. Lib. xiv. c. 44. It is probable, as the Druids were always themſelves clad in white, and as they choſe that their victims ſhould be of this colour, that they conſidered it as an emblem of innocence, expreſſing the purity of their own intentions, and for that reaſon as acceptable to the Deity. See p. 8, note.

This done, they mark the banquet, ſprinkled o'er
With leaves of oak, a conſecrated ſtore:
Around their temple, when th' oblation ceas'd,
The ſimple votaries ſat, and ſhared the feaſt.
O! happy race, untaught to feel annoy,
Their days in freedom ſpent, their nights in joy;
On earth's wide common left at large to roam;
Their parent Nature, and the world their home!

Thus paſs'd the time; while day ſucceeding day,
And year on year revolving roll'd away.
While yet the Druid race maintain'd their reign,
Each age beheld them in the holy Fane.
Here, on his throne * the Parent Chief appear'd,
A prince, a ſov'reign, judge, by all rever'd.

He

The Parent Chief appear'd.—* Office of the chief Druid.

Here, on his throne, &c. &c.—All writers on this ſubject agree in mentioning that ſupreme authority which the Druids exerciſed over all ranks of men, among whom they had obtained an eſtabliſhment. They are deſcribed in the poem as in the infant ſtate of ſociety, before regular government and ſubordination had yet taken place. At this period, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that they were quietly permitted to engroſs all power, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, without oppoſition or controul. In later ages, Cæſar, Lucan, Dion, Chryſoſtom, and Ammianus Marcellinus, concur, at

diſtant

He ſpoke, and ſaw th' obſequious tribes obey!
Even kings beneath him held inferior ſway.
His voice reſounding in the warrior's ear,
Stay'd in his vengeful hand th' uplifted ſpear:
Supreme in office, as in power, he rul'd;
Tam'd their rude paſſions; check'd, o'eraw'd, controul'd:
What time for counſel, or for aid they came,
He heard indulgent each ſucceſſive claim;
As with a father's care, their wants ſupplied,
Nor view'd the ſuppliant's meek approach with pride:

diſtant periods, in aſſerting—that their power was above that of kings, who appear to have enjoyed only a titular ſovereignty under arbitrary maſters, who ruled them at pleaſure. Cæſ. Comment. Lib. ix. Chryſoſt. Orat. xlix. Ammian. Marcel. Lib. xvi. Lucan. Lib. i. Among this race of men, one perſon was commonly choſen, who had the title of Arch Druid; and to him government was committed. He was generally elected by the majority of voices; and the election was ſometimes ſo tumultuouſly carried on, as frequently to be determined by the ſword. The grand Druid, who preſided over the whole order, had his reſidence always in ſome part of the Britiſh iſles; in which, according to Cæſar, the order was originally inſtituted. The ſame writer ſpeaks of annual aſſemblies, which were held by the Druids in Gaul; and to theſe he informs us that perſons reſorted from all parts of the adjoining country, and ſubmitted implicitly to their deciſions.

Stay'd in his vengeful hand, &c.—Strabo particularly informs us, that the druidical augurs often ſtopped a battle in its very commencement, when the hopes and paſſions of men were at the greateſt height. Lib. iv.

But, juſt to each, with pleas'd and chearful mind
Sent ſome rejoicing back; and all reſign'd.
* Hence, oft' the Bard, while Heav'n inſpir'd the ſong,
To deeds of virtue rouz'd the liſt'ning throng.
He ſung of combats, and of acts that crown'd
Their mighty chiefs, and ſires in arms renown'd:
Or wildly ſweet, his pleaſing ſong diſplay'd
The grove, the ſhepherd, and the melting maid.
O'er his bold harp, in higher numbers born,
Was heard the muſic of th' enlivening horn,
That call'd them to the chaſe. In thought, they ſhare
The prize, and ſend the flying dart on air.
But chief of Eſus, heav'n's eternal Lord,
He ſpoke; the Power through all his works adored.
Of orbs immenſe, that gild th' ethereal way,
At his great *fiat* burſting into day.
Refulgent orbs! that in their rounds proclaim
His praiſe, who lives in each ſtupendous frame.

Hence, oft' the Bard, &c.—* Office of the Bardi.

Thus

Thus ſung the Bard: then gave the race command
To mark in all the God's directing hand.
He ſhow'd the climes where Virtue finds her home,
And to their view unveil'd *a life to come.*
* Here too the Warrior laid his arms aſide,
The ſpear, the axe, in many a combat tried.
Meekly the chief advanc'd, and bending low
Before the ſacred ſhrine, perform'd his vow
With humble reverence. On the ſhrine he laid
The lamb, the kid; and here th' oblation paid.
Youth to the Fane with grateful offerings trode,
And pale age trembling bent beneath it's load:
Here foes, by ſcars of mutual wounds defac'd,
Each nerve by hate, and long remembrance brac'd;
Awed by the God, give fierce reſentment o'er,
Join kindred hands, and dream of war no more.

And to their view unveil'd, &c.—That one of the principal druidical tenets was the ſublime doctrine of a future ſtate, is beyond all queſtion. They added to it, indeed, all the abſurdities of the metempſychoſis, as we ſhall ſee afterwards. Vide Cæſar. Comment. Lib. vi. Tacit. De Mor. Germ. et alios Auct. ſup. citat.

Here too the Warrior, &c.—* Offering of the warrior.

Hither,

* Hither, in haſte, the white-robed Prieſt repair'd,
With ſacred Virgins and th' attendant Bard;

And

* Office of the Euvates, or Eubages.

Hither in haſte, &c.—I have followed Strabo in conſidering the Euvates as having the charge of auguries, and whatever related to divination. But that author is ſingular (at leaſt among ancient writers) in his notion, that this claſs of men conſtituted an order altogether diſtinct from that of the Druids. They were undoubtedly included under this general denomination; and were probably a kind of retainers to the order of the Bardi or Bards, who appear to have been their immediate ſuperiors. Vide Strabo, Lib. iv.

With ſacred Virgins.—It is not to be denied, that thoſe women are ſaid to have been the inſtruments of perpetrating deeds, in the oblation of human ſacrifices; which cannot be related, or even thought on, without horror. Some ancient writers ſeem to dwell upon this ſubject with a ſatisfaction, which may induce an impartial reader to ſuſpect that their accounts are greatly exaggerated. And as the Druids themſelves committed no part of their tenets to writing, we cannot hear them in their own defence. I ſhould, however, do injuſtice to my ſubject, if I did not obſerve upon this occaſion, in their behalf; that in the exerciſe of this practice, in the inhuman manner in which they are ſaid to have ſet about it, the Druids exhibit an object altogether ſingular and extraordinary. For, although hiſtory offers to our view barbarous nations, who ſacrificed human victims in ſuch a manner, at the celebration of their horrible orgies; yet we ought to remember, that they meant, by this rite, to conciliate the favour of certain malevolent beings, who were ſuppoſed to derive pleaſure from the miſeries of mankind; and to whom they believed that they had given offence. But we have already ſeen that the Druids entertained the pureſt and moſt ſublime conceptions concerning the majeſty and perfections of the Divine mind; that they venerated the oak, as the Jews did the moſt holy place, only as being honoured by his immediate preſence; that they officiated among men as his vicegerents; and that they every where inculcated the doctrine of immortality. We ſhall ſee likewiſe afterwards, that they were by no means deſtitute of ſcientific knowledge; in the acquiſition of which they appear to have made a proficiency, that in ſome circumſtances is aſtoniſhing and unaccountable. I may venture to affirm, that we ſhall not find in

And leaning o'er the victims, as they died,
Explor'd the future in the guſhing tide.
Oft' as the flood, impell'd with various force,
To right, or left, directs it's headlong courſe;
They ſaw ſome bleſs'd event, or trac'd with ſkill
Divine, ſome ſignal of impending ill:
Heav'n-taught, they ſpeak what all with reverence hear,
And wake alternate joy, ſuſpence, and fear;
Skill'd in each nobler art, they knew to tame,
Or work the kindling paſſions into flame.

all hiſtory, any example of a people equally intelligent and well informed as they were, who propitiated the Deity by human ſacrifices, offered, or rather butchered, with circumſtances that would diſgrace the moſt ferocious barbarian. Strabo, ubi ſup. Diod. Sic. Cæſ. In other reſpects, neither the Romans nor Carthaginians, who practiſed this inhuman rite themſelves, had any reaſon to find fault with it among others. See a vindication of them in Lewis' Hiſt. Brit. where the ſubject is diſcuſſed at length. The preſent, I confeſs, is only a preſumptive argument in favour of the Druids: and the reader muſt be left to form his own judgment concerning affirmations, of which the evidence is by no means unqueſtionable.—I have uſed the word *victims* in the poem, as a general term, which may be taken in a circumſcribed or comprehenſive ſenſe, as the reader may chooſe. See Cæſ. Comm. ubi. ſup. Procop. Goth. Lib. ii. Strabo, Lib. vii.

Oft as the flood, &c.—Strabo informs us, that the virgin Druideſſes divined of future events from the flowing of the blood, as well as from the poſition and appearance of the entrails of their victims. Ubi ſupra.

What

What time the moon's pale creſcent roſe to ſight,
Ere yet her full orb gave it's gentler light;
The wandering tribes along the woodland ſpread,
Explored the healing ſeeds, and here convey'd.
As when the numbers on Brazilia's land,
Search the rough diamond o'er th' extended ſtrand;
Or in the tide, the glaſſy tide, behold
Bright ſands that flame with undulating gold:
Juſt where the wave a yellower gleam diſplays,
Or brilliant trembles in the ſolar blaze;
Each ſprings elate to gain the glittering prize,
Hope wings his ſpeed, and ſparkles in his eyes.
Not with leſs joy the pleas'd beholder flew,
What time the ſacred plant appear'd in view,
To reach it, and to ſeize. To him was given,
He judged, the god-like boon conſign'd by Heav'n.

Explored the healing ſeeds.—The reader will find a particular account of the ceremony with which the miſletoe was gathered, in Pliny's Natural Hiſtory, Lib. xiv. c. 44. He informs us, that this work was always ſet about on the ſixth day of the moon; a circumſtance, of which the term *creſcent* is as nearly expreſſive, as poetic language can admit. This day, according to that author, was particularly venerated among them.

Bleſs'd

Bleſs'd was the man, and bore an envied name,
Who with the loaded bough triumphant came
The firſt: his offering on the altar plac'd,
The Fane received him, and the Sire embrac'd.
Then from his ſeat he mov'd; when round him preſs'd
A throng, where all preferr'd their joint requeſt
To ſhare the boon. The ſage beſtow'd a part
On each, while tranſport glow'd in every heart.
All deem'd the cure of every ill, their own;
All with one voice approach'd th' Eternal's throne:
The prieſt (his oriſons to *Eſus* paid)
Then ſought the deep receſſes of the ſhade.
But fam'd o'er all was he, with happy care
Who caught the adder's wondrous egg on air!

A form

The adder's wondrous egg.—I have not omitted any material circumſtance in Pliny's narration of this fable; which is, indeed, ſo abſurd, and ſo utterly incredible, that I once thought of leaving it out altogether. As it forms, however, a ſtriking circumſtance in the hiſtory of Druidiſm; and as it is related by that eminent natural philoſopher, as a fact, which the Druids did not call in queſtion; ſome readers might have found fault with its omiſſion, in a poem, of which the *wonderful* is one of the moſt natural and pleaſing embelliſhments. I confeſs that I am at a loſs to give any rational account of this abſurd tale to the philoſophical reader. The mundane *egg* may

A form of power divine, that (ſtrange to tell!)
Roſe at th' Enchanter's voice, and magic ſpell.
Snakes at his word, conjoin'd in myſtic fold,
From ſlime condenſed the maſs of various mould.
Unſeen it lay amid' the brood entwin'd,
But heard their hiſs, and mounted on the wind.
Bold was th' attempt and hazardous, to gain
The prize, purſued by all the parent train.
The hardy warrior, as he mark'd it's flight,
With gaze unvarying held his aim in ſight;
Wheel'd, as it turn'd in many a giddy round;
And ſeiz'd rejoicing, ere it touch'd the ground.
Then, breathing poiſon as they ſwept along,
Forth ruſh'd with gulphy throats the ſerpent throng:

have been a *Druidiſh*, as it was an *Orphic* enigma. The Druids have left no records to which we can have recourſe. The preſent fable may have obtained local belief, among the inferior order of men, in ſome particular country or diſtrict. And our author, eager to depreciate a hated community, meant, moſt probably, by relating it, to bring a general charge againſt the whole body, although without juſt foundation. See an ingenious explanation of this fable in the Ancient Univ. Hiſt. vol. xviii. p. 590, and Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. xxix. c. 3.

Follow'd

Follow'd the champion's devious track with ſpeed;
And with dire hiſſings ſcar'd his ſtarting ſteed.
Amid' the river, deſperate in his courſe,
With his bold rider plung'd th' affrighted horſe;
And ſtemming with his breaſt the rapid tide,
Uninjur'd bore him to the farther ſide.

Eſcap'd the peril, on the bank he ſtood,
And eyed the looſe crew ſcattering near the flood.
Th' erected creſt he mark'd, the radiant mail,
The teeth in fury gnaſh'd, the laſhing tail;
Their ſcales by rage improved to brighter gold,
And blaſting eyes that ſparkled as they roll'd.

Soon as they fled, the youth, with trembling hand
Obey'd, though loth, the wizard's ſtern command.
Cloſe to his prize a golden ring he bound,
And paſs'd a thong obſervant, through the round:
To prove it's virtues then, the hero gave
His dear-bought treaſure to the faithleſs wave.

He ey'd it glittering in the ſolar beam;
When, paſſing ſtrange! it floated on the ſtream,
Not by it's weight depreſs'd.—The trial o'er,
His egg the favour'd chief triumphant bore
Along the land, along the yielding main;
And ſafe convey'd it to his native Fane.

Here when he came, the Druid tribe confeſs'd
His power divine, and deem'd the region bleſs'd.
All on the form with wonder fix'd their view;
With tranſport ſome, with envious hearts a few.
On his own throne the Prieſt the victor plac'd,
And with a wreath of oak his temples grac'd:
Then gave the boon, that ſhields from all annoy
It's Lord, and gilds his future days with joy.

But chief when ſilent night aſſumes her reign,
When ſtars unnumber'd gild th' ethereal plain;
In concourſe here, conceal'd from vulgar eyes,
Thy ſons, great Nature, ſat, and mark'd the ſkies!

Unſkill'd

Unſkill'd in modern arts or claſſic lore,
On philoſophic wings untaught to ſoar;
They talk'd of other worlds, that as they roll,
All move inform'd *by one inſpiring* Soul.
Heav'n was their glorious theme, nor ſkill'd to trace
With teleſcopic aids th' extent of ſpace;
They view'd through tubes of ſimpler frame, diſplay'd
The lunar mountains, and the lunar ſhade.
The vale they ſaw, the long-extended plain,
And iſles, like clouds, amid' th' inveſting main;
Her oceans pour'd abroad by Heav'n's command,
And orb that ſpeaks the Maker's forming hand.
No written monuments, ordain'd to laſt
To future ages, and record the paſt,

The

They talk'd of other worlds.—We might judge, from the account which Pomponius Mela gives of the Druids, as pretending to foretel future events from the poſitions and motions of the heavenly bodies, that they had adopted the abſurdities of judicial aſtrologers, Lib. iii. cap. 1. Be that matter as it may, we learn from Diodorus Siculus, that the Britiſh Druids had contrived ſome method of diſcovering the prominencies on the ſurface of the moon, and that they aſcertained her opacity. Lib. iii. cap. 11.

No written monuments.—It is well known, that the Druids committed no part of their

The Druid chiefs preſerv'd: but to the ſound
Of harps, the nobleſt youths aſſembling round,
Learnt of their myſtic lore; in ſtrains that pleaſe,
With warmth imparted, and retain'd with eaſe.
Of ſpirits they ſung, that when the mortal frame
Diſſolves, in darkneſs ſink, or mount in flame;

That

their tenets to writing. Cæſar aſſigns two reaſons for this conduct. One is, that they did not chooſe to expoſe their doctrines to the knowledge of the vulgar: the other, that they wiſhed to exerciſe the memory of their diſciples, who ſpent twenty years in getting their verſes by heart; and whoſe attention might have been relaxed by the peruſal of written records. Comment. ubi ſupra.

Of ſpirits they ſung, &c.—I aſcribe the belief of the doctrine of the Metempſichoſis to the Druids, by the authority of the laſt-quoted writer, who, during his long reſidence in Gaul, muſt have learnt ſomething of the matter. *In primis*, hoc volunt perſuadere; non interire animas; ſed ab aliis poſt mortem, tranſire ad alios: atque hoc maxime ad virtutem excitari putant, &c. Ubi ſup.—It is difficult to reconcile this poſitive declaration to the teſtimony of Pomponius Mela, who was a native of Spain, and who aſſerts that this tenet was not received among the Gauls. But that author's reaſoning on this ſubject does not appear to me to be concluſive, againſt the evidence of Cæſar to the contrary; and that of many other writers. Pomponius, among other practices of the ancient Gauls, mentions particularly their cuſtom of burying along with the dead their accompt-books, and notes of money that had been lent by them; from their notion, that theſe might be of uſe to the departed ſpirit in it's new ſtate of exiſtence. He ſays, likewiſe, that the friends of the deceaſed caſt themſelves, upon ſome occaſions, into the funeral pile, that they might enjoy his ſociety in that ſtate without interruption. "Now," ſays he, "of what uſe could theſe books, &c. have been to ſouls which had tranſmigrated into other bodies, of whatever nature, and were no longer the ſame perſons? And can we reconcile to the doctrine of tranſmigration, the conduct of their friends, who, in this caſe, muſt have acted a part that is altogether abſurd and ridiculous?

That loſt in brutal forms, ſupinely lie,
Or ſoar on rapid pinions to the ſky.

Whoſe

lous? Would they have gone voluntarily into the other world in order to aſſociate with men who were transformed into brutes, or vegetables, or even into men and women, placed, perhaps, in different quarters of the globe, &c.?" Let us juſt obſerve in paſſing, that theſe arguments tend to expoſe the abſurdities of the preſent wild doctrine in general, rather than to prove, that it has not obtained credit in any particular inſtance. Without entering particularly into this ſubject, I ſhall confine myſelf to what our author has ſaid, concerning the belief of tranſmigration among the various nations of the Gauls. On this head, two remarks will probably occur to the intelligent reader. In the firſt place, it is not improbable, that theſe nations, although they adhered to other druidical notions, may, in the courſe of ages, have rejected that of the Metempſichoſis. This conſideration acquires force, when we reflect, not only on the natural inſtability of this people, but on their fierce and warlike diſpoſition. The idea of triumphing over an enemy in the other world; of having his ſkull converted into a cup for his uſe; of indulging in licentious pleaſures; and of gratifying, above all others, the paſſion of revenge; was much more congenial to the inclination of a ferocious and untamed barbarian, than that of tranſmigrating into a beaſt, of crawling in a reptile, or of ſporting upon the winds, even in the radiant plumage of a bird of paradiſe. Where oppoſite evidences therefore are produced of men who had opportunities of being well informed of what they relate; who lived at conſiderable diſtance of time from each other; and who had no inducements, as far as we know, to produce partiality of any kind, in a matter wholly indifferent; it is ſurely more reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the people, to whom they aſcribe the belief of a certain tenet at one time, may have rejected it at another, than that the authors of our information ſhould have deliberately impoſed upon all poſterity, by retailing a falſehood. But if we ſhould not be inclined to allow that the whole Gauliſh nation rejected this doctrine at any period, during the continuance of *Druidiſm*; why may we not ſuppoſe that it was only partially adopted, as characterizing a particular tribe or party of religioniſts? In all other religious eſtabliſhments whatever, we find many ſects who are diſtinguiſhed from each other by certain peculiar forms and opinions. And, perhaps, the true reaſon why we cannot point out thoſe of the Druidical nations, may be, that what we know concerning their principles, &c. is lamely and ſuperficially

Whoſe voice affrights, in ſounds diſcordant born,
Or warbles in the throat that hails the morn
They ſhow'd the tyrant prince, whoſe barbarous hand,
And iron ſceptre awed and cruſh'd the land;

ficially retailed in the works of ſtrangers and foreigners. Now the belief of a Metempſichoſis may, for aught we know to the contrary, have been the characteriſtical tenet of one particular ſect, while it was reprobated by another; and our author, not having gained a knowledge ſufficiently comprehenſive of the whole Druidical inſtitutions, may have aſcribed to a whole nation, practices, whereby a part of it only ought to have been diſtinguiſhed.

But without reſting too much upon this conjectural evidence, it appears to me, that the belief of tranſmigration may have been univerſal among the Gauls, notwithſtanding all that this writer ſays to the contrary. And ſome of his arguments may be turned againſt their author. With this purpoſe, let us take for granted what Pomponius allows, that the ſoul of one man may tranſmigrate at death into the body of another, as readily as into that of a beaſt, or of a reptile. In this caſe there was ſurely *equal* reaſon *at leaſt* to believe, that his notes of money, and his accompt-books, might be of uſe to him (even in the caſe of a previous examination) as there was to judge, that theſe could anſwer any purpoſe to the *unbodied ſpirit*, detached wholly from matter and never again to be united to it. The above-mentioned receipts, &c. might therefore be buried with the body as properly, by thoſe who believed in a Metempſichoſis, as by thoſe who rejected it. With reſpect to the other circumſtance mentioned by our coſmographer, I need only to obſerve, that when a man has taken the deſperate reſolution of dying with his friend, he determines at the ſame time to follow his fate in all events. And if ſuch a man was bred in the belief of this doctrine, he might judge it poſſible, that the ſame being who rendered him uſeful to his friend in one ſhape or body, ſhould have ordained that he might be ſo in another.—In what I have ſaid on this ſubject, it is with ſome regret that I differ ſo widely in opinion, once more, from certain learned and reſpectable authors, who produce this paſſage as containing deciſive evidence, that the *Gauliſh* Druids, at leaſt, did not believe in the doctrine of a Metempſichoſis. Univ. Hiſt. vol. xviii. p. 638. But I think for myſelf on this ſubject, and refer what I have ſaid to the judgment of the rational and intelligent reader.

A ſtern

A ſtern oppreſſor, bent to ſcourge, not heal;
The foe, not guardian of the public weal.
To ſight reſtor'd in ſome unſeemly form,
The bear low-growling, or the crawling worm:
There, on the waſte, a ſolitary lord;
Here, on the dunghill's loathſome maſs abhorr'd.
The rageful ſoul, in yelling wolves they found;
The proud, in reptiles grov'ling on the ground:
Pale envy croaking in the obſcener toad,
And guile, the ſerpent, in her loath'd abode.

Guilt thus they puniſh'd:—while the purer mind,
They taught, to forms of ſpotleſs hue conſign'd,
Friſk'd in the lamb, or mid' the ſacred grove
Uninjur'd, wanton'd in the ſportful dove:
Till the freed thought a happier ſeat poſſeſs'd,
And man's fair form receiv'd the welcome gueſt.

Oft in the ſhrine, with ſacred raptures fir'd,
They touch'd a nobler theme, as heav'n inſpir'd.

Of earth's wide field they ſpoke, a glorious frame,
Once whelm'd in floods, but doom'd at laſt to flame.
As through the miſt that wraps the mountain's height,
Dim ſtands the ſummit, half diſclos'd to ſight;
The woods that clothe his mighty ſides, appear
Like flitting clouds, that ſhade th' autumnal ſphere:
Such was th' eventful ſcene before them brought,
Thus opening, ſtruck the ſeer's prophetic thought.
Of central fires they taught, or ſolar rays
By heav'n ordain'd to ſpread the gen'ral blaze:
Of melting elements that all conſpire,
When Nature ſinks, to light the funeral pyre;
When hills, woods, oceans, doom'd one fate to ſhare,
In ſmoke, and ſpiry flames, aſcend on air.
But riſing beauteous from a world o'erthrown,
They ſhow'd a purer orb, a bliſsful zone:

Once whelm'd in floods, &c.—What follows from this line to the words, "Thus raiſed, &c." is founded upon a paſſage of Strabo, who ſays, that the Druids ſpoke of two ſucceſſive diſſolutions of the world, by water and fire; and of it's renovation. Lib. iv.

Thrice

Thrice happy manſions, for the juſt prepar'd;
And climes, where Virtue meets her great reward.
Of theſe they ſung; while round th' attendant train,
All warm'd to tranſport, caught th' informing ſtrain;
And chear'd with hope to join the god-like few
In fairer regions, held the prize in view.

Thus rais'd, the Druid Chiefs with pride beheld
A race that long in glorious acts excell'd;
Rear'd in the Fane, to deeds exempt from blame,
And virtue's great reward their conſtant theme:
Their prieſts to reaſon tam'd reluctant will,
And taught to ſhun th' enticing paths of ill,
In peace, at eaſe they liv'd ſecure from harms,
And ſtood, when war approach'd, unmatch'd in arms;
Not deaf to honour's voice, nor, in the hour
Of peril, cruſh'd beneath the rod of power,
They met th' oppreſſor; and to fear unknown,
Each deem'd his country's ſacred cauſe his own;

Shun th' enticing paths of ill.—One of the principal Druidical maxims was, to abſtain from the commiſſion of evil.

When fame allur'd, or glory gave the call,
Renown and conqueſt crown'd their works in all.

As on ſome rock, projected o'er the flood,
The parent eagle feeds his gen'rous brood;
Beholds them riſing with th' advancing year,
Attends them watchful, and delights to rear;
Sees his own image in their kindling eyes,
And points in ſight to each th' expected prize;
Aſcending, guides their quiv'ring wings in flight,
And glad conveys them to th' aerial height.
The Druids thus beheld each riſing grace,
Each deed of arms that ſpoke a martial race,
With joy. What time they held their hoſt in view
With conqueſt crown'd a bold and choſen few,
With ſongs divine they hail'd them as they came;
Then bade the bard record each warrior's fame.
The youths, returning with the cloſing day,
Gave each the ſpear, and ſhining ſhield away;
Then chearful all, beneath o'erſhading boughs
Amid' their hamlets ſunk, and ſhar'd repoſe.

Yet,

Yet, from a race who held their peaceful ſeat
In the wild waſte, or foreſt's deep retreat;
A ſimple tribe, unſkill'd in arts refin'd,
Arts deem'd to tame, and civilize mankind:
A line of conquering chiefs deriv'd its ſource,
All crown'd with honour in their glorious courſe;
Alike for martial deeds, and virtues known,
That grace the ſubject, and adorn the throne:
The Muſe whoſe voice confers impartial praiſe,
Now calls from night a tale of ancient days.

Amidſt the throng that, at their chief's command,
Around the Fane conven'd in ſocial band,
One youthful warriour (Edgar was his name)
Surpaſs'd his peers in ſtature as in fame.
In ſcience vers'd beyond the vulgar kind,
Not leſs than deeds that ſpeak the noble mind;
Each plant and herb of healing power he knew,
And ſhrub whoſe leaves imbibe the morning dew;
Skill'd in each holy, each myſterious rite,
Whoſe deep-laid purpoſe lay conceal'd from ſight;

He

He held in memory the ſtrains divine,
Retain'd, and taught through all th' extended line
From age to age, and ſtudious to convey
Their ſenſe, awak'd on chords th' inſtructive lay:
For him the Muſe in life's gay morn inſpir'd,
And touch'd a heart with ſecret raptures fir'd;
All, while he ſtrove the ſwelling ſong to raiſe,
Was ſilent wonder——when he ceaſed, was praiſe.

One morn the virgins, and the warriour-train,
In dance aſſembled round the ſacred Fane;
A maid that day, her willing ſire decreed
At *Eſus'* ſhrine to bid the victim bleed;
From ſocial joys debarr'd, to make abode
With ſeers who know, and prieſts who ſerve their God.

He held in memory, &c.—The cauſes have already been aſſigned for which the Druids choſe not to commit any part of their tenets to writing. See page 31, n. Theſe were preſerved in verſes, moſt probably with the purpoſe of being received and remembered with facility. They amounted, according to all accounts, to an incredible number: one ancient author tells us, that they were computed to be twenty thouſand. From this account, we may juſtly conclude, that retentive memory, and poetical genius, were qualities of which the union was regarded in thoſe days as rendering the Druidical character compleat.

Hence in a vale ſhe paſs'd her earlieſt days,
Vers'd but in rites, and learn'd in myſtic phraſe:
Her father thence releas'd the willing fair,
To new aſſociates, and a purer air.

When now the nymph the ſolemn concourſe grac'd,
Of Druid friends, by all with joy embrac'd:
Superior o'er her mates Florella ſtood,
As the tall pine o'ertops th' encircling wood;
Each meaning glance the conſcious zeal confeſs'd,
All gaz'd, and paſſion glow'd in every breaſt.

The rite begins; the Prieſt aſſumes his ſtand
On high; the numbers, as he waves his hand
Recede;—the maid from her ſurrounding friends
Parts at his call obſequious, and attends!
Free, undiſmay'd, with chearful heart ſhe came,
And eyes that ſpoke a mind unſtain'd with blame:
Ev'n when the Prieſt in ſolemn form ador'd
The King ſupreme, great Nature's mighty Lord,
In graceful act ſhe ſtay'd, prepar'd to hear;
Nor look infirm betray'd ſuſpenſe or fear.

This paſt—the Druid, turning from the reſt,
Words of dire import to the fair addreſs'd,
In voice, in geſture awful!—He began
An oath that ſevers from th' abodes of man
The Heav'n-devoted Virgin.—As he ſpoke,
A ſigh unbidden from her boſom broke:
Trembling ſhe caſt her timid eyes around,
As one amaz'd; then fix'd them on the ground:
Nor gave aſſent, yet ling'ring, nor denied;
But ſilent ſtood, and turn'd her face aſide.

While all with wonder mark'd the bluſhing maid,
Reſolv'd ſo late, now wavering, pale, diſmay'd;
The din of arms was heard, reſounding far,
And ſhouts that rouze th' intrepid youth to war.

He began an oath, &c.—There were two, or, according to ſome authors, three orders of Druideſſes. The firſt conſiſted of thoſe who were thought to have poſſeſſed a prophetic ſpirit, as the reward of having devoted themſelves to perpetual virginity. The ſecond was of married women, who were forbidden to have matrimonial intercourſe, unleſs at one particular time during the twelvemonth. The laſt were rather attendants on the others than a diſtinct order, although ſubjected likewiſe to ſimilar reſtrictions. The heroine of the tale, appears to have been deſigned for the firſt claſs, the members of which were in greater eſtimation than the others, on account of their ſuppoſed gift of prophecy. Vid. Ant. ſup. citat.

They

They look'd: and lo! triumphant from the main,
An hoſt in deep arrangement hid the plain!
O'er all, Carauſius held ſuperiour ſway,
Norwegia's boaſt in many a glorious day!
His hand, that ſtill to victory convey'd
The train, before them wav'd a ſhining blade.
Stern in the front he tower'd, advancing ſlow,
And hurl'd a fierce defiance at the foe.
Meantime the Druid clos'd th' unfiniſh'd rite,
And bade his ready bands prepare for fight.
Vows, Heaven-impell'd, to Tanaris he paid,
And call'd Andraſte to the Warrior's aid:
Then gave command that heralds ſhould proclaim
Reward, the Conqueror's meed, and deathleſs fame
To him, whoſe hand a glorious prize ſhould bear,
The Monarch's head in triumph on his ſpear.
Thus while he ſpake, the general voice declar'd
All bent on conqueſt as their firſt regard;
Each kindling eye a generous warmth confeſs'd,
But keener ſpirit glow'd in Edgar's breaſt.

As flies th' aerial arrow from the bow,
Thus flew the youth to meet th' advancing foe.
The hoſts retiring at their Chief's command,
Left ſpace for combat to each hoſtile hand:
A pair in courage and intent the ſame,
Unmatch'd in ſtrength, in ſtature, and in frame.
One in his prime, diſplay'd a mighty ſhield,
A maſs enormous, worn in many a field;
While one, a youth, though bred amidſt alarms,
A ſhining helmet grac'd, and lighter arms.
But dread, by Heaven inſpir'd, a new-born gueſt,
Now firſt the Monarch's mighty ſoul depreſs'd:
Surpriz'd he felt its power, and vainly ſought
By force to drive it from his troubled thought.
Hence, like a lion darting on his prey,
He ſprings to fight; the foe conſigns him way:
Yet watchful as he moves, maintains his place,
Repels his ſtrokes, but ſhuns the chief's embrace.
At laſt the youth a ſure advantage ſpied;
He flung the lance and pierc'd Carauſius' ſide.

A purple

A purple torrent guſhing from the wound,
Smok'd on the blade, and dy'd the ſpace around:
No more the Monarch's blows retain their force,
Fate, inſtant fate arreſts him in his courſe;
Prone dropt the ſpear; nor more his arm upheld,
To guard his manly breaſt, the ſpreading ſhield:
Expos'd he ſtood; while Edgar's forceful dart
Sunk deep, and quiver'd in his bounding heart:
And lo! the mighty falls!—The various cries
Of conquering bands and ſcatter'd hoſts ariſe!
Thoſe ſeek their ſhips; and theſe, a joyful train,
Purſue the fierce barbarians to the main.

Meantime, young Edgar, from the trunk disjoin'd
The head, and caſt the ſhining helm behind;
Then, proud the trophy of his fame to bear,
Rais'd high the bloodleſs viſage on his ſpear.
Back to the Fane with heart exulting trode,
And on the ſhrine a warrior's prize beſtow'd.

But now returning, rich with treaſur'd ſtore,
The bands in triumph ſpread the region o'er.

The Fane once more receiv'd the ſhouting throng;
They ſhar'd the feaſt, and ſwell'd the martial ſong.
Young Edgar chief, above his mates renown'd,
Stood near the Prieſt, with oaken garlands crown'd:
Beſide him lay the Monarch's arms diſplay'd;
A pole to ſight expos'd the grizzled head.
The virgins ſacred to th' eternal King,
Behind, in concert ſtruck the trembling ſtring:
With theſe the lovely nymph aſſum'd her place,
With baſhful beauty, yet ſuperiour grace.
They ceas'd.—On Edgar ſmiling, ere he broke
The ſacred ſilence, thus the Father ſpoke:——
" Brave youth, whoſe virtues gain deſerv'd acclaim,
" Reward awaits thee, and immortal fame!
" Know, from a country ſav'd, thy mighty deed
" Some ſignal boon demands, ſome glorious meed.
" Speak then thy wiſh, and what our ſovereign ſway
" Commands, receive on this thrice happy day."
He ſaid.—The youth in ſilence lent an ear:
The ſpoils, the gold, the hero's trophies near,

Crowns,

Crowns, honours, treaſures, all before him brought,
And ſpread by turns, not once perplex'd his thought.
One prize he valued, blind to all beſide,
And in Florella wiſh'd a matchleſs bride:
On her he gaz'd, while love, before ſuppreſs'd,
With hope, deſire, and tranſport, warm'd his breaſt.
The fair no leſs the ſtifled ſigh betray'd,
And heart that fluttering ſpoke ſuſpenſe and dread:
She lov'd the youth, and hence impatient, bore
The forms, and ſacred vow deſir'd before;
Their eyes with pleaſure ſparkling, as they ſtole
In hidden glances, thrill'd from ſoul to ſoul.
He roſe, and pointing to the beauteous maid,
Keen, yet abaſh'd, in faultering accents ſaid:
" If to the ſtrength, by heavenly powers conferr'd,
" And deed by theſe inſpir'd, ye grant reward;
" Let then this virgin, bleſs'd with charms divine,
" Nor yet devoted to the Gods, be mine!
" But know, I ſeek not your conſent alone
" To gain the Fair:—this heart demands her own.

" Her's

" Her's be the judgment, unreſtrain'd by force,
" Unblam'd, to tread where choice directs her courſe:
" Free with ſome happier mate to make abode,
" Or here with ſacred virgins ſerve her God;
" Her ſire's, amid the peaceful vale to ſtay,
" Or mine, to gladden each returning day."

Thus he.—Deep ſilence ſtill'd the liſtening crew;
All gaz'd with wonder on a ſcene ſo new.
The Druid chief, till now untaught to yield,
By turns the youth, by turns the fair beheld.
He on his truth and conſcious worth relied;
Her bluſhes ſpoke th' aſſent ſhe wiſh'd to hide:
Then thus (intent the virgin's words to ſpare)
The Prieſt benign addreſs'd the expecting pair.

" Ye favour'd of the Gods, in peace depart!
" I know the wiſh that glows in either heart:
" Heav'n, that forbade the ſolemn rite, decreed
" This nymph the prize of thine unequall'd deed.
" Go, in each other happy."—Edgar preſs'd,
This heard, the virgin to his throbbing breaſt:

She,

She, baſhful, timid, trembling, veil'd her face,
And ſunk delighted in his warm embrace:
At Eſus' ſhrine the juſt oblation paid;
The pair returning ſought the peaceful ſhade.
A people reſcued ſpoke the Warrior's praiſe,
And Heav'n gave honour, bliſs, and length of days.
From theſe a race of conquering heroes came;
A mighty Genius gave their deeds to fame:
Fingal, renown'd in Oſſian's deathleſs ſtrain,
On Morven's heights who rul'd a wide domain,
Hence drew his lineage. Oſcar, famed afar,
Shone like his anceſtor, unmatch'd in war.
But chief, the Monarch of the tuneful line,
Like generous Edgar, felt the breath divine.
Hail thou, the father of immortal ſong!
Whoſe harp to reaſon tam'd a barbarous throng!
Whoſe mind diſtinguiſh'd as the placid ray,
Through polar night effulgent pour'd the day.
Friend of the hero's ſoul, who gav'ſt to fame
His worth, his acts, and elſe forgotten name!

How bleſs'd the train, who, liſtening to thy lays,
In chearful numbers roam'd the woodland maze!
Or ſoft, on moſſy banks afar reclin'd,
Caught melting notes that murmur'd on the wind!
Shar'd while awake the Bard's celeſtial fire,
Or heard, in bliſsful dreams, an angel's lyre!

Ye days of quiet, now beheld no more!
Where are ye fled? To what far-diſtant ſhore?
Here open lawns that yield no grateful ſhade;
There, buſy numbers o'er the region ſpread,
(What time the city pours her throngs abroad)
Expel the meek queen from her old abode.
Yet all, in queſt of happineſs, purſue
One aim, and hold th' illuſive ſhade in view:
On earth they ſeek their glorious prize, and there
Deceiv'd, explore the trackleſs waſte of air.
Ye bold Aeronauts! whoſe boſoms glow,
While gaping thouſands gaze and ſhout below!
Ye raſh adventurers, to the future blind,
Who ſeek the goddeſs on the ſtormy wind!

Not in th' inflated ball that ſteers your flight,
Nor cloud that ſpreading ſcreens the frame from ſight,
She lives; but journeying to the climes of day,
Leaves wondering birds to hail you on the way.
Ah! in the depth of Tahaiteean groves,
She dwells with ſwains that gain unenvied loves!
Far on the boſom of the temperate main,
O'er iſles remote extends her peaceful reign:
There oft' the power with pleas'd attention ſtands,
And ſmiling, eyes the work of ſimple hands.
Theſe from the graſs the finer threads prepare,
To weave their web, and thoſe, the ſhining hair:
Some with bright plumes their growing work infold,
A velvet mantle fring'd with flowering gold.
She ſees the maid her jetty locks adorn
With beads, that ſparkle to the rays of morn;
Or joins in ſocial iſles the mirthful band,
Or leads the dance on Monootopa's ſtrand.

Tahaiteean groves, &c.—See the various ſcenes that are here deſcribed in Cook's Voyages.

There ſits the Power, from buſier ſcenes convey'd,
There WALKS with NATURE o'er th' unbounded ſhade:
There ſooth'd to reſt, and pleas'd with artleſs ſtrains,
Reſtores a golden age on Indian plains.

11 : 7 : 49

FINIS.